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DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Unusual quantities of choice frozen mackerel are now available in the New England, middle Atlantic, and mid-western sections of the country to ease local meat shortages and give variety to summer menus, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service reported today.

With enormous schools of mackerel on the New England fishing grounds, seiners have been coming in loaded with fish and the season's catch apparently will be the largest for several years.

Shore plants at Boston and Gloucester, chief mackerel ports, have already frozen more than twice as much mackerel as last year, and some fishermen have turned to other species because freezing and storage facilities are inadequate for the large catches. In order to avoid a shortage of mackerel later in the year, a large part of the fish now on hand should be used this summer, marketing specialists of the Fish and Wildlife Service said.

The common or Boston mackerel is a handsome, iridescent fish caught all the way from Virginia Capes to the coast of Nova Scotia when it visits coastal waters during the spring and summer. First mackerel of the season are caught off New Jersey; then the fish move up the coast and late-season fishing is chiefly in the New England area. In the fall or early winter the mackerel suddenly vanish.

Most mackerel are caught at night, when the schools of fish are sighted by lookouts on the cruising seiners. By colliding with myriads of tiny phosphorescent creatures, the mackerel stir up a misty glow in the water as they feed. The schools are then surrounded with huge, bag-like nets. Smaller quantities are taken in pound nets close inshore.

One of the finest of food fishes, the mackerel is rich in fat and deliciously flavored. Usual market sizes are 1/2 to 2-1/2 pounds, and part of the catch is now filleted. Whole mackerel are usually stuffed and baked, or they may be split and broiled.

Frozen fish should be kept in the freezing compartment of the refrigerator; allowing them to thaw. Refreezing them impairs the flavor and texture. To prepare for cooking, they may be placed in another part of the refrigerator overnight, or may be thawed more quickly at room temperature. Fish that are to be fried need not be thawed.

Cookery experts of the Fish and Wildlife Service suggest preparing mackerel by any of the following methods:

Baked Mackerel

1 3-pound mackerel

2 cups bread crumbs

1 small onion, minced

1 slice bacon, chopped

2 tablespoons green pepper, minced (optional)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper

2 slices bacon

Fry chopped bacon, add onion and green pepper and simmer 10 minutes. Add to bread crumbs and seasoning and mix well. Split dressed fish (head and tail may be left on if desired) and spread with dressing. Fold fish over and close opening with skewers. Place fish on oiled rack in baking pan. Lay the two slices of bacon on top of the fish. Bake in a hot oven (450°F.) for 30 minutes, basting frequently. (Serves 6)

Broiled Mackerel Fillets

2 pounds mackerel fillets (1/2 inch thick)

3 tablespoons fat (bacon fat or vegetable shortening)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

Paprika

Wipe mackerel fillets with a damp cloth and place on rack of broiler pan. Dot top of fish with fat, season with salt and pepper and sprinkle with paprika. Place fish in a preheated broiler and broil two inches from the heat for about 15 minutes. Turn fillets over, dot this side of fish with fat, season with salt and pepper and sprinkle with paprika. Continue broiling for another fifteen minutes or until done. (Serves 6)

Fried Mackerel in Crumbs

2 pounds mackerel fillets

1/2 cup bread crumbs

1-1/2 teaspoons salt

1/8 teaspoon pepper

3 tablespoons vegetable shortening

Wipe the fillets with a damp cloth. Dip the fish into the combined crumbs and seasonings. Melt the shortening in a skillet and fry fillets on one side for about 8 minutes, then turn and fry about 7 minutes on the other side. (Serves 6)